[Ancient Georgia]

565 423 621

ownership of land was unknown. Immovable properties belonged to the *gwari* as a whole and the oldest member of it, the *mamasakhlisi*, was its sole regulator and manager. *Gwari* or *sakhli* then represented a basic social group welded by common descent, common ownership and communal production; in other words ancient Georgia did not know a social economic unit smaller than the *gwari*. This however, does not mean that there were no family households. The household or family as a biological and moral union did of course exist, but juridically and economically it formed an inseparable part of the *gwari*. Families could and did naturally live in separate homes, but socially they were very closely bound to their respective *gwarni* outside of which they had no legal existence. The *gwari* and *sagwareulo* system was the keystone of all social life. Hamlets, villages and towns were organized in accordance with this system, for in the majority of cases the whole village was held in a single *sagwareulo*. This system lasted until the seventh century A.D., and in some cases survived until the thirteenth century; while among the mountaineers of the Aragvi and the Ksani valleys, it persisted till as recently as the eighteenth century.

592 621

178 61

With the invasion of the Romans in 65 B.C. and the subsequent imposition of a "treaty of friendship" on Iberia, this native system of state and social organization became increasingly subject to external influences. The Romans interfered frequently, for instance, with the succession rights with a view to placing their own creatures on the Iberian throne; but the older practices proved strong enough to persist until the end of the second century A.D. when succession by primogeniture became the rule.

178 554

Other modifications began to take place. Differences in social status gradually developed within the *gwarni* and by the middle of the second century A.D. social inequalities had become already, at least partially, established.

594

The first foreign writer to allude to the existence of social inequality in Georgia was Dio Cassius who lived in the second half of the second century A.D. In giving an account of the arrival in Rome of Farsman II (A.D. 116–40) King of Iberia, and of the reception accorded him by the Emperor Hadrian, Dio Cassius states that

> "the Emperor watched Farsman and the sons of other *illustrious* Iberians perform tournaments". [1]

[1] Dio Cassius, *Hist. Romana*, III, 69.

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1

Until the mother regains her strength and recovers entirely, she is never left alone during day or night, because she may be frightened by something, as the people say.

After the woman has been delivered of her child, a priest is invited, who sprinkles the house with holy water.

This invitation of the priest and the sprinkling of the house with holy water is nothing more than the process of purification which is practiced in the whole of Georgia, and represents the survival of the old beliefs when the women were regarded as unclean and lived apart, and the rules of purification after childbirth were observed. These views and customs have been replaced by others and forgotten in the Lowlands of Georgia, but they still hold ground, as we have seen from the examples given in the previous discussion of the Alpine communities of the Khevsurs, Pshavs, Tushes, and Svans, although there also they are not static but changing, dying gradually under the pressure of civilization.

In reviewing this chapter, dealing with the customs and beliefs of the Georgian Highlanders regulating the peculiar position of woman in society based on the religious beliefs of the people, our aim has been to present facts, avoiding as much as possible any generalizations and especially the construction of theories in order to explain the origin and meaning of the customs described.

We think that any attempt to explain the origin of the customs in question is, for the present, premature. The scientific knowledge of the subject is still unsatisfactory,[58] and especially in the field of the ethnological researches in the Caucasus, where the science of ethnology is in its very infancy.[59] On the other hand, the possibility of a great future for ethnological investigation in the Caucasus is not difficult to predict.

Expressing our opinion of the necessity of precaution, as above stated, we have in mind the interesting work by V. Bardavelidze-Lomia, frequently cited in this chapter. This valuable work was of great assistance in discussing the subject in question, for which I am cordially thankful to the author. But allow me to mention,

---

[58] Lowie: b, 205-6.
[59] Chitaia:
[60] Chursin: d.